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TECHNICAL NOTE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR - BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

PROPOSAL FOR THE INCEPTION AND MANAGEMENT OF

ARCHEOLOGICAL WILDERNESS AREAS

A SUMMARY OF:

Phillips, Robert W.

- 1972 - Management Strategies for Archeological and Historical Resources Located in Remote Wilderness Locations in Arid Lands of the Public Domain: Cedar Mesa - Grand Gulch: A Case Study. Master's Thesis, University of Michigan. (BLM Research Contract #52500-CT3-52 with the University of Michigan).

Archeological wilderness areas are a unique concept in the overall wilderness idea. Instead of stressing man's awareness of the natural environment, the archeological wilderness purpose is to create an awareness of man's ability to adapt to difficult environmental situations. Man is treated as an integral part of the ecosystem. The peak experience is such an area comes through "on-site involvement" with the past historical and physical challenges of wild arid lands. The visitor has a chance to live as primitive man once did in this unique setting.

Of prime concern in the development and management of archeological wilderness is how to best protect archeological and ecological relationships while providing superlative recreational and educational experiences for visitors. Long term research opportunities are a major goal in the management of these areas.

The irreplaceable nature of archeological remains, combined with an increased interest in Indian culture and a swelling rate of visitation to remote arid areas have created the need for a comprehensive management plan to deal with cultural resources in this context. Robert W. Phillips has proposed a detailed zoning scheme to deal with the special problems encountered in an archeological wilderness.

As a criteria for identifying the best portions of desert resources, the following guidelines were established:

1. The test of relative scarcity.

Is the feature in question a rare item, one of a kind? High priority must be given to unique remains. Such features may be classified into a special management zone.

2. The test of superlative quality.

Which sites are the oldest, the best preserved, the biggest?

3. The test of completeness.

A resource area should represent a complete environmental system. The area with the greatest diversity of components is the most valuable.

4. The test of imageability.

Do the sites create strong, clear-cut visual images, and do secondary features reinforce the meaning of the primary features? The stimuli in the area should contribute to a desert archeological experience.

5. The test of authenticity.

This category relates to the evolution of the environment over time. Is the present landscape the result of natural evolutionary events? Is the viewer free of distraction from influences that are out of context with the setting (e.g., aircraft passing overhead). Contemporary manipulation should be in harmony with the environmental system over time.

Also to be considered in the scheme are size, boundary lines, access, incompatible uses, and competitive pressures.

a. Size should take into consideration diverse environmental zones and complete cultural units.

b. Boundary lines, in establishing cultural units should follow watershed lines. If this is not possible, the boundaries with the least adverse impact on archeological resources and wilderness areas are to be considered.

c. Access areas should skirt the zone with highways, which are to be used as outlets for embarkation points into the area.

d. Incompatible land uses and competitive pressures which cannot be removed should be included in the intensive use zone. Other land uses that are totally incompatible (e.g., establishing a microwave relay tower in a wilderness setting) should not be allowed.

Four zones have been proposed for an Archeological Wilderness Area. They are:

I. Public Intensive Use Zone.

In this zone are access corridors, interpretive trails, scenic overlooks, visitor centers, and trailheads. This area penetrates the larger archeological resource zone.

II. Archeological Resource Zone.

Most of the wilderness unit area is contained in this zone, providing opportunities for continuing archeological research and education. Archeological education projects, public interpretation of archeological research and man-environment relationship, limited livestock grazing, and supervised hunting are included in this zone. The general public is excluded except by permit to engage in a specific activity.

III. Archeological Wilderness Zone.

Visitation by permit only will be allowed in this area which has the most rugged terrain and remote locations. Close supervision of users is necessary in this area, and use of professional guides has been recommended as mandatory to entrance. Archeological interpretation could be developed at appropriate enclave locations within the archeological research zone.

IV. Scientific Reserve Zone.

This zone consists of enclaves within the Archeological Wilderness Zone that are off limits to public wilderness visitors. In the foreseeable future, only archeological surface survey will be allowed within the scientific reserve. The object of such an area is to maintain land which receives minimum impact as a reserve for future research.

Of high priority in an Archeological Wilderness is the protection of the artifact-environmental system. The relationship between environmental and/or cultural factors is an essential part of archeological interpretation. To remedy the popular practice of pot hunting, three steps might be taken:

1. Identify the zones now receiving the greatest impact from potting.
2. Have randomly scheduled periodic patrols with sufficient personnel to raise the probability of apprehending violators to a 90% level.
3. Advocate change in the judicial attitude toward Antiquities Act offenders, and revise local ordinances so that district judges could assume jurisdiction for violations.

Management concerns applicable to an archeological wilderness include curtailing grazing and hunting, limiting motorized access, restricting all terrain vehicles, avoiding intense recreational developments, and resisting the publicizing of environmental attractions which would tend to draw large numbers of visitors. Access roads, scenic highways, service areas, and public information centers should retain the character of an archeological setting.

Management strategies which are applicable to any remote arid archeological wilderness area are:

1. Public involvement and acceptance of the wilderness.

This is especially important in regard to local residents and established resource users. Professional archeologists and ecologists should be consulted prior to formation of specific proposals. Advisory panels and public hearings should be held both before the establishment of the area, and afterwards as a review of management procedures.

2. Careful selection of appropriate areas.

To provide a peak experience, areas should have significant and substantial archeological evidence, and should be relatively untouched and undeveloped by modern man.

3. Protection and management of the resources.

Prevention of artifact loss is of highest priority in such an area. An inventory of hazardous areas such as regions subject to flash flooding or land slides should be taken. Emergency equipment caches could be placed in strategic areas. Because the unique character of the resources requires close supervision, professional guides are recommended. Visitors should be advised that they will be travelling under conditions as close to the primitive character of the area as possible.

4. Restriction on public use and behavior.

Visitors must accept restrictions on their personal behavior. A policy must be established to limit the numbers of people allowed into the area. It should be made clear to the user that it is a rare privilege to be allowed into an archeological wilderness. Phillips recommends that persons wishing to enter the area should first be certified for back country travel.

5. The handling of rare artifacts.

Rare artifacts, when found should be removed from the site by proper authorities and replaced with a replica. The artifact should then be placed on public display in a museum that is closest to the source of the object.

6. Manipulation of the natural environment.

To create an environment close to that which the prehistoric inhabitants lived in, burning and clearing of thick brush may be recommended.

7. Archeological and environmental interpretation.

A prospective visitor should be first preconditioned off-site through books, films, television, etc. He is to be made visually aware of the environmental factors as well as of the physical expenditures which will be demanded of him. On site interpretation at visitor centers and museums is to expose the person to the landscape and the life-way of the prehistoric peoples. Archeological research can be introduced to the visitor by allowing him to watch and/or participate in research work. While in the wilderness area, the guide is responsible for interpretation. After the visit, slides, replicas, photos, personal notes and sketches will serve to reinforce the experience.

8. Promotion for a continuous pattern of archeological, ecological, and behavioral research.

Such research will allow a better understanding of the archeology and environment in the wilderness area. Research of contemporary man's use of an archeological wilderness will enable better management of such areas.

The implications of this proposal calls for new direction in the allocation of public domain lands, and a committment on the part of the Bureau of Land Management, principle user groups, and local residents. Presently, administration of such areas by the Bureau of Land Management falls under a primitive area classification (Code of Federal Regulations 43, part 6220). It is hoped that in the future, archeological wilderness can be given a distinct wilderness classification, and that the Bureau of Land Management will be authorized to designate and manage wilderness areas under the Wilderness Preservation Act of 1964.

